



UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Paving the Way for Women Entrepreneurs

Presenter: E. Diane White, author and expert in international economic development, sustainable investing and gender equality

Lesson Description

This lesson examines the pivotal role women play in a nation's economy and looks at gender-bias constraints that women specifically face in creating new businesses. It also reviews strategies and tools to address certain types of gender discrimination, including negative gender stereotyping that can keep women from succeeding in business.

Lesson Objectives

1. To learn the pivotal role women play in a nation's economy.
2. To examine the role of gender bias in constraining women entrepreneurs.
3. To learn strategies and tips for dealing with certain types of gender discrimination, including negative gender stereotyping.

Discussion Questions

1. Gender is a social construct based on cultural and religious practices as well as the division of labor between men and women. Cultural biases and adherence to traditional roles of women have been used to prevent women from succeeding in the workplace or having the opportunity to become entrepreneurs. What are some of the specific cultural biases that exist in your community? Why do they persist? How are they wrong? In what ways have women in business excelled despite these cultural biases? What are some of the ways that women continue to face challenges in the business community? How have men been helpful or a hindrance in the development of women entrepreneurs?
2. Women, because of cultural barriers and biases, often lack collateral (such as fixed property or land), have less exposure to business management and entrepreneurial mentors, or their business endeavors are not perceived as entrepreneurial activity. As a result, they have a higher hurdle to jump in order to gain access to business financing. What are some of the ways to alleviate gender-specific constraints in business? What new forms of collateral could financiers consider for women who do not own land? How can lenders provide financial services to women entrepreneurs who are unable to travel or venture away from their homes? What kinds of features in mobile technologies would assist the small-business woman?
3. In this lesson, Diane White discusses four obstacles women encounter in the workplace and business: not being taken seriously, not engaging in self-promotion or "tooting their own horn," seeking too much approval or being a people pleaser, and fear of technology. Identify similar behaviors that you have seen in yourself or other women. What did you observe? What would you do differently?

Developmental Action

1. Review the YALI Network Online Course lesson "Networking to Get Ahead" (<https://yali.state.gov/courses/personal-growth-3/>)
2. Form a business or entrepreneurship support network. Identify an existing business network that you believe will benefit your work or business and develop a networking plan.
3. Collaborate with others to develop a plan for ways financial institutions can support women entrepreneurs. Be sure to address prevailing biases and misconceptions. Look for opportunities to pitch your plan and put it into practice.

About the presenter: E. Diane White is an author and nonprofit executive with expertise in economic development, sustainable investing and gender equality. Most recently, she was the chief operating officer of a midsize nonprofit organization focused on development aid for Africa. She is also an entrepreneur, having co-founded and led a chain of decorative home stores in Washington, Philadelphia and New York. She began her career in international development at the World Bank. Ms. White earned an MBA from Harvard Business School, a master's in international studies from Johns Hopkins University, and a B.S. in political science from Oberlin College.

